

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Fig. 1. This sheet, which includes Fig. 1, replaces the original sheet including Fig. 1. In Fig. 1, the reference numeral 20 has been added.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet

REMARKS

The office action of October 8, 2008, has been carefully considered.

It is noted that the drawings are objected to under 37 C.F.R. 1.84(p) (5).

Claims 1-4 and 6-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) over the patent to Weyer et al.

Claims 5 and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Weyer et al.

Relative to the objections to the drawings, applicant has attached hereto a replacement sheet of drawings in which Fig. 1 has been amended to include the reference numeral 20.

In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted that the objection to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. 1.84(p) (5) is overcome and should be withdrawn.

In view of the Examiner's rejections of the claims, applicant

has amended claims 1 and 3, as suggested by the Examiner.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims presently on file differ essentially and in an unobvious, highly advantageous manner from the methods and constructions disclosed in the reference.

From the Examiner's comments it seems there is some misunderstanding concerning the "soft reduction" zone. This is the zone in which the strand is not yet completely hardened, namely where the strand is between 30% - 100% hardened. The soft reduction is not present in the zone that is solidified as suggested by the Examiner on line 1 of page 6 of the Office Action. Soft reduction involves only a limited reduction in thickness of about 1.5 mm in order to improve the quality of the structure, in particular segregation and shrinkage. Based on this background, applicant has amended the independent claims as suggested by the Examiner to clarify the claims.

Weyer et al. do not disclose a method or construction having the features recited in the claims presently on file.

In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted

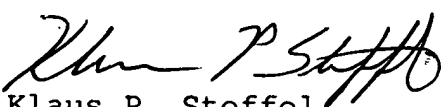
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that the rejection of claims 1-4 and 6-9 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) and the rejection of claims 5 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. 1-3(a) over the above-discussed reference are overcome and should be withdrawn.

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested.

Any additional fees or charges required at this time in connection with this application may be charged to Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 11-1835.

Respectfully submitted,

By 

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Dated: January 8, 2009